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President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS A MODALITY IN THE FORMULATION, PREPARATION, EXECUTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (E/1992/75)

Mr. AMBATCHEW (Director, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/75), said that it briefly reviewed the relevant decisions and guidelines of the General Assembly, the High-level Committee for the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The report identified major constraints and made a number of recommendations. The Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries had underlined the need for extensive use of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) in all the programmes and activities of the United Nations system. The report briefly outlined the progress made in that area.

In the past greater attention had been paid to the promotional aspects of the modality, but increasing efforts were being made to apply it to the implementation of programmes and projects. However, there were major constraints, including the quality and availability of data on the capacities existing in developing countries, weak mechanisms for promoting TCDC at the national level, and problems related to recruitment, internal procedures and finance. Use of the modality was not widespread and its full potential had not been realized. The reluctance of the United Nations system and of Governments to consider TCDC as a viable option was a further stumbling-block and a change in attitude was needed. In that connection, he welcomed the step taken by UNDP in identifying TCDC as a priority area for the period 1992-1996, to be taken into account in the preparation and implementation of programmes and projects.

(Mr. Ambatchew)

The report recommended that Governments should adopt policies to encourage national bodies to give priority to the use of the TCDC modality. It also advocated greater use of orientation seminars at the national level on the advantages of TCDC and recommended that the national focal points be strengthened. Priority should also be given to providing enhanced access to information on the capacities available in developing countries.

Mr. KONG Fannong (Director, Technical Cooperation Policy Division, Department of Economic and Social Development) said that his Department was seeking to promote TCDC in a catalytic manner in line with the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the decisions of the United Nations legislative bodies. The Department's TCDC activities could be grouped into four main categories. The first category included those activities conducted under the United Nations regular programme as a way of promoting South-South technical cooperation, such as the organization of workshops, seminars and training programmes to facilitate exchanges of experience and expertise among developing countries. The second pertained to the Department's close involvement with the UNDP Special Unit and host Governments in supporting programming exercises at the interregional and regional levels. The third category included those activities carried out in connection with UNDP programmes under the Indicative Planning Figure (IPF), while the fourth concerned active utilization in the Department's world-wide programmes of the capacities of developing countries, including the provision of experts, consultants, training and equipment.

The Department had a focal point for TCDC and maintained close cooperation with the UNDP Special Unit. The new climate of international relations called for stronger South-South cooperation backed up by complementary assistance from the North. A triangular partnership was needed for that purpose which would benefit all concerned and help the developing countries play a catalytic role in TCDC activities.

He welcomed the increased awareness of the value of TCDC shown by the UNDP Governing Council, as reflected in the fact that the Council had identified TCDC as one of its six priorities for the fifth programming cycle. As a consequence, his Department would be seeking to find more ways and means of including TCDC among its technical cooperation activities.

Mr. SALT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the issue was closely related to the wider question of how to develop TCDC further and maximize its impact. The European Community and its member States had consistently stressed the importance of both economic and technical cooperation among developing countries in promoting development but felt that the impact of such cooperation had suffered from the lack of a clear definition and an understanding of how the cooperation was to be implemented.

As the Buenos Aires Plan of Action recognized, TCDC was primarily the responsibility of developing countries, which must recognize their own skills and needs and take the initiative in linking with each other to increase the flow of technical cooperation. The United Nations system and other multilateral organizations had an important role to play in their areas of accepted expertise, while UNDP should assist developing countries in capacity-building and planning, and strengthen its efforts to help them overcome problems encountered in promoting and implementing TCDC.

The European Community and its member States were actively supporting TCDC by backing programmes for information, training and technical assistance among developing countries under the Lomé Convention and the European Development Fund. Bilateral donors had also made an important contribution, and UNDP, the United Nations regional commissions and the development banks had a vital role to play. The UNDP Governing Council had included TCDC among its six priorities for the fifth programming cycle, and UNDP could make an important contribution by building and strengthening national capacity, providing information, and promoting TCDC more effectively as a means of implementing projects.

Some developing countries already had the necessary skills of project design, implementation and evaluation, and that experience needed to be fully exploited, particularly by the least developed countries. The ultimate aim must be capacity-building in recipient countries to promote national execution of projects undertaken by the agencies of the United Nations system. Information was of key importance in ensuring that, once acquired, expertise could be passed on, and in that connection the UNDP Information Referral System (INRES) was of particular value.

(Mr. Salt, United Kingdom)

The conclusion to be drawn was that TCDC needed to be considered as a factor in all development activity. The potential for the transfer of expertise between developing countries should always be considered and the lessons learned from successful projects or programmes passed on to other countries.

Mr. Sher Afgan KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the principles and recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action remained as valid as ever and continued to provide an appropriate framework for TCDC. In the past, the full potential of TCDC had not been systematically explored, but the recommendations for reforming operational activities might offer a suitable organizational framework for its promotion, by facilitating the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on activities of the United Nations system at the field level. That would enable the system to learn from its own experience and provide a world-wide information network on innovative solutions to development problems common to developing countries.

In some cases, developing countries were in a better position to pass on knowledge than international organizations because they faced common constraints and had been required to adapt foreign models to their own circumstances. However, the relevant information on development experience was not systematically available, and the United Nations system was best placed to collect, analyse and disseminate such information at the country level. That process should be facilitated through information networks, but also through funding from the United Nations system. The existing INRES facility should be adapted to focus on development experiences as well as institutions, and particularly on innovative solutions. An information network of that kind would play a fundamental role at the programme development level, allowing TCDC to play a more prominent part. TCDC programming exercises could be adapted to focus on the exchange of information at the programming and strategy development level.

A systematic analysis of UNDP development activities over the past 40 years would automatically produce information relevant to TCDC since it was often true that innovative solutions to certain development problems could be

(Mr. Sher Afgan Khan, Pakistan)

found only in other developing countries. TCDC should be an integral part of good development and not merely a special activity conducted by development organizations outside their mainstream programmes.

The question of procurement from developing countries was also important and he welcomed the fact that the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office had begun publishing manuals indicating what individual developing countries had to offer.

TCDC could not take place in isolation and would be more fruitful in the context of a favourable international economic environment. The sharp deterioration in that environment had affected the ability of most developing countries to pursue TCDC despite their commitment to it.

Mr. RAMADHAR (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the General Assembly had consistently emphasized the overriding importance of the United Nations system's technical cooperation in promoting self-reliance among the developing countries by building up their productive capability and their indigenous resources and by increasing the managerial, technical, administrative and research capabilities required in the development process. The TCDC modality was a key element of that approach, in that it meant optimum use of scarce resources through the sharing of technical expertise and skills between developing countries.

The scarcity of the resources available for development cooperation made it imperative to seek innovative and cost-effective approaches, and the TCDC modality had therefore assumed added importance as an instrument of self-reliance in the formulation and implementation of technical cooperation projects. Primary responsibility for decisions on the implementation modality remained with the country concerned, while the United Nations development system played a catalytic and supportive role.

Self-reliance constituted the ultimate goal of FAO technical cooperation with developing countries, and there were currently over 400 National Project Directors in the FAO Field Programme, as well as some 850 National Project professional staff. FAO was assisting approximately 100 nationally executed projects in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, although progress in introducing the national execution modality had not been without its difficulties.

(Mr. Ramadhar, FAO)

The main obstacles lay in the area of inadequate understanding of the potential effectiveness of TCDC, lack of awareness of the resources available, and insufficient capacities for project identification and development. The handbook referred to in paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75) had been extensively circulated and was an attempt to clarify modality and procedures. It was supplemented by a periodic newsletter, which enjoyed wide distribution both within and outside the Organization.

TCDC was an item in the in-country training and project formulation, monitoring, evaluation and implementation which FAO organized for National Project Directors and government officials. However, awareness of the TCDC modality and procedures was not a matter for national staff only. A one-day workshop on TCDC had been organized in April in collaboration with UNDP for the benefit of headquarters staff, and the briefing of FAO Representatives and Country Office staff was a continuing activity.

Providing information on where and how to find resources was a task which called for concerted effort on the part of the entire United Nations system, and FAO was collaborating with a variety of agencies in order to compile national compendia of capacities and needs. In particular, it was cooperating with INRES.

Apart from supporting a number of promotional TCDC activities, FAO endeavoured to integrate TCDC with project implementation through the provision of project inputs from developing countries. In many of the activities supported from the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme, expert services had been obtained on TCDC terms, for example in connection with shrimp production in Guinea-Bissau. Subcontracting arrangements with a competent institution of another developing country in project implementation was another effective mechanism, as was the network approach. There were now some 135 technical cooperation networks promoted by FAO, and such longer-term institutional collaborative arrangements offered considerable scope for using the TCDC modality in technical cooperation activities.

Some development needs by their very nature transcended national boundaries. On the basis of economies of scale it was always cost-effective to treat such needs through intercountry projects, and FAO's experience had shown that such projects were ideally suited to the TCDC modality.

(Mr. Ramadhar, FAO)

South-South cooperation was not incompatible with, but rather complementary to, North-South cooperation. Regional and subregional bodies and activities offered a wide range of possibilities for using the TCDC modality in donor-assisted projects. The promotion of self-reliance was the basic purpose of technical cooperation, and the TCDC modality, which aimed to use the indigenous resources and capacities of the developing countries, was an effective means for realizing that basic goal.

Mr. NIE Hualiang (China) said that his delegation was pleased to note the progress made since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. Most developing countries had included in their programme formulation and implementation an important TCDC component. While it was true that there had been substantial achievements in that area, in no small part due to the efforts made by the agencies of the United Nations development system, those achievements still fell far short of expectations, and technical cooperation among developing countries as a modality had not been fully put to use. The main reasons were, firstly, the lack of funds available to the developing countries as a result of political upheavals and serious economic difficulties and the very limited funds provided by developed countries and international organizations; and secondly, underutilization of the technologies, equipment and expertise of the developing countries themselves. In certain fields, some developing countries possessed advanced technologies which were available at low cost, and their underutilization was a problem which should be addressed.

In the light of the importance China attached to TCDC activities, it had established a focal point for the coordination of such activities. For decades, China had availed itself not only of the assistance provided by international organizations, but also of substantial resources of its own in providing active support for TCDC. Through the organization of training courses, the sending of experts abroad and other activities, China had shared its technologies with other developing countries and helped them in the implementation of their national programmes. It would continue to participate actively in such programmes, and hoped that the developed countries and the agencies of the United Nations system would make further efforts to promote TCDC activities.

Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that, while it was highly appropriate that the United Nations development system should take a leading role in the promotion of the TCDC modality, his delegation was concerned to note from the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75) that progress had been less than rapid. Although useful progress reports had been produced and various recommendations made, there had been little overall system management to promote and expedite implementation of the modality. In fact the initiative had largely rested with the individual agencies within the system, some of which, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and FAO, seemed to have responded actively. Some overall coordination and promotion was evidently required. In that connection, it would be desirable if the Department of Economic and Social Development could take the lead both in analysing the problem and in finding suitable ways to implement the TCDC modality further throughout the United Nations development system.

While many of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report were in themselves useful, they illustrated the problem of implementation, in that there was a definite gap between real impact and unspecific exhortation. The need for system-wide management of the implementation process required action on many of the issues discussed in connection with operational activities, such as strengthening the role of the resident coordinator and decentralization.

In conclusion, he said that there was significant potential in promoting regional approaches to the problem, and it would be timely to introduce the concept of "regional execution" into the development vocabulary, to supplement the term "national execution".

Mr. MONTERO (Chile) said that his country attached great importance to TCDC as a useful tool for promoting national and collective self-sufficiency and had always complied with the recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the High-level Committee. However, Chile was concerned that TCDC had not been fully put to use and had not advanced to the desired extent, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75).

The recommendations contained in the report were highly relevant, particularly with regard to the need for a change in attitude to ensure that

(Mr. Montero, Chile)

TCDC was widely appreciated and applied as an effective, less costly and a relevant modality of cooperation. He also welcomed the useful guidelines contained in the report and the realistic overall assessment of the shortcomings in TCDC among less developed countries.

With regard to the constraints affecting TCDC, which were mainly due to lack of resources, he wished to make a number of points. Firstly, the developing countries must make a greater political commitment to TCDC and strengthen their capacity for sharing useful experiences. Secondly, that commitment must be reflected in the national and international institutions promoting and coordinating TCDC, and the developing countries must strengthen their internal structures both politically and financially. Thirdly, the role of UNDP was particularly important in terms of international support and the UNDP Special Unit should be strengthened. In that connection, he welcomed the fruitful work undertaken by the Special Unit in the framework of the Latin American Economic System.

Chile had developed a wide range of links with various other countries and was participating in many bilateral cooperation programmes of mutual benefit, mainly involving Latin American, Central American, Caribbean and Asian countries, with the emphasis on the training of experts in various fields. It had also launched a number of initiatives with African countries which it hoped to expand in the future. TCDC programmes were also under way in the Central American region in areas such as social development, combating poverty, management of international cooperation, and university cooperation.

Chile welcomed the growing awareness of the fundamental role of TCDC in eradicating poverty and promoting growth in the developing countries and hoped that it would be more effectively used in the future.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the relevance of TCDC as a modality for strengthening national capabilities and collective self-reliance remained undiminished since the adoption more than a decade previously of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. Although it was heartening to note that TCDC was viewed as an integral part of cooperation for development within the United Nations system, progress had been confined to a limited number of countries. The developing countries themselves no doubt bore primary responsibility for TCDC,

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

but resource constraints had proved to be a stumbling-block. It had been rightly recognized that exclusive reliance on extrabudgetary funding sources for the promotion of TCDC was a serious constraint which should be remedied.

A number of steps had been identified at the national level for the promotion of TCDC, including the strengthening and streamlining of the process of matching technical cooperation needs and capacities, favourable national policies (with TCDC as a preferred option), the identification of sectors where TCDC could more widely be applied, and efforts to enhance the awareness of officials. In that connection, his delegation wished to mention the important role played by the TCDC programming exercises in promoting and matching national needs and capacities in developing countries. Such exercises identified a large number of projects to be undertaken through the TCDC modality, which rightly indicated its tremendous potential. Unfortunately, many projects could not be implemented, owing to lack of resources and proper follow-up.

While agreeing with the various measures suggested for the United Nations system in paragraph 26 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75), he wished to highlight the importance of changing attitudes with regard to TCDC, in addition to improving and expanding the services provided by INRES.

Mrs. SCOTT (Jamaica) said that it was timely that the Council was now making a serious effort to respond to the repeated calls for sustained coordination and coherence among the many entities within the United Nations system. Her delegation hoped that the Department of Economic and Social Development, which had now assumed responsibility for TCDC activities, would pay special attention to the TCDC modality and provide the necessary orientation and training programmes to developing countries.

TCDC must be seen as the key to the whole development effort: it was to be regarded not as an alternative but as a complement to the more conventional forms of development assistance. For that reason, it should be integrated into the United Nations development system, and not treated as a separate entity. The Secretary-General's report suggested that the United Nations agencies were cognizant of the need to intensify and expand TCDC, yet progress on the application of the modality had been painfully slow. She noted with concern that implementation constraints were due mainly to lack of funds.

(Mrs. Scott, Jamaica)

Jamaica had been engaged in a number of TCDC initiatives through the provision of personnel and training to many of its Caribbean and Latin American partners. Regional and subregional networking among developing countries had the potential for advancing the TCDC modality, particularly if telecommunications technology was used to maximum effect. For that reason, she concurred with the Secretary-General's recommendation that INRES should be improved and expanded.

The effective implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 through the efforts of the Department of Economic and Social Development and the various specialized agencies was an integral part of the process of ensuring that the operational activities of the system were responsive to the needs of developing countries. Her delegation intended to study the various proposals made in the Council for strengthening operational activities, but regretted that the relevant reports could not be produced in time for the Council's consideration.

Operational activities must be carried out in accordance with Governments' own national priorities. While adhering to the guiding principles of neutrality, universality and flexibility, the United Nations should confine its role to assisting and promoting the efforts of developing countries to meet their development goals and priorities. The international development agencies should seek to harmonize their programme cycles with those of individual countries. In the case of Jamaica, the Government had elaborated four major socio-economic imperatives in its five-year development plan for the period 1990-1995, and it expected that the valuable assistance which the United Nations could provide would be harmonized with the objectives of the Plan.

There was a clear need for a well-developed coordination mechanism at the field level, involving, inter alia, greater use of common facilities and premises, since development projects which were executed in an uncoordinated manner would serve only to frustrate the objectives of recipient Governments.

Expansion of the national execution modality should be strongly supported, but in some cases that must be a gradual process, and at all times national execution must relate to the pace of development and the particular

(Mrs. Scott, Jamaica)

circumstances of each country. Countries should themselves be able to dictate the pace of implementation. In Jamaica's case, national execution would now depend on the extent to which the Government was reorganizing its operational capabilities as a result of the ongoing measures towards liberalization of the economy. The process of economic liberalization had proved very demanding. Constraints had been placed on Jamaica's execution capability in the context of the structural adjustment programmes which had had to be implemented and which had led to drastic budgetary and staff reductions in the public sector. Factors such as those must be borne in mind when Governments' capacity to execute projects in a timely fashion was assessed.

Mr. VUKMANOVIC (World Health Organization) said that a comprehensive review of TCDC in support of the Global Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000 and of primary health care had been undertaken at the eighty-ninth session of the WHO Executive Board in January 1992 and at the forty-fifth World Health Assembly in May 1992. The review had indicated that WHO had effectively organized the coordination of its programmes and activities involving TCDC in order to accelerate the implementation of primary health care world wide. WHO had established focal points for TCDC at its regional offices and at headquarters, and had mobilized its technical and financial resources to facilitate networking of developing countries' institutions at the national, intercountry and interregional levels.

In the field of health, TCDC activities involved, for example, the production, procurement and distribution of essential drugs and medical equipment, the development of low-cost primary health care technologies, joint programmes for human resources development, and collaborative research and control programmes for certain diseases. Within the framework of WHO's activities, TCDC was thus an integral part of all programmes, whether or not they were financed from its regular budget or from other sources.

As part of the efforts to evolve a global strategy for TCDC during the 1990s, WHO was organizing an Interregional Consultation on TCDC Programming in Health, to be held in Indonesia in February 1993. The overall objective of the Consultation would be to increase the use of TCDC by developing countries as a mechanism for addressing national health priorities. The strategy for

(Mr. Vukmanovic, WHO)

TCDC programming in health matters during the 1990s was expected to improve TCDC programming world wide, by enhancing developing countries' technical and financial resources in the health field. The Consultation would result in clearer definition of the common concepts of technical cooperation within WHO, including TCDC, and should result in a new strategy for TCDC programming and health at the country level by mid-1993.

Mr. YENEL (Turkey) said that TCDC had long been seen as simply a complementary component in development, but that there was now a clearer understanding of its importance. Any failure to exploit TCDC fully lay with the developing countries themselves rather than with the United Nations system, since in general developing countries lacked appropriate focal points. In practical terms that meant that many offers of assistance were not accepted by would-be recipient countries. What was needed was a timely means of distributing information, in which connection the Council should consider how the specialized agencies might assist in establishing appropriate networks.

Mr. AMBATCHEW (Director, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, United Nations Development Programme) said that two main issues had emerged: the need for the United Nations system to give priority to learning from past initiatives and the need for the dissemination of information. Both those issues were of great importance to UNDP and the Special Unit.

INRES had been established with an emphasis on the capacities of developing country institutions. Further consideration could be given to the role of INRES in a networking environment for the dissemination of information.

Mr. RAMADHAR (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the points raised by the representative of Turkey were important. FAO was working on two information systems, relating to agricultural research and sectoral issues, and would continue its work in that area.

Mr. ATRIA (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), speaking on behalf of all the regional commissions, said that he wished to comment on the role of the regional commissions in supporting TCDC. One example was offered by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the

(Mr. Atria)

Caribbean (ECLAC), which had established an inter-sessional committee to review the Commission's activities in support of TCDC. ECLAC support for TCDC involved a range of projects relating to such areas as highway maintenance, water resources, social investment and computer databases for investment projects. In some instances data networks had been established that had subsequently been maintained by extrabudgetary contributions from member States, as, for example, in the field of export insurance. ECLAC was also establishing a network relating to intraregional trade. Clearly, the promotion of TCDC activities on the basis of extrabudgetary resources presupposed a continuing interest on the part of donors.

Mr. FAN Huishun (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that the promotion of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries was a priority area for funding by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). UNIDO had established a framework of 12 general objectives, with a particular focus on workshops in such areas as information exchange and expert services.

UNIDO had a number of projects involving cooperation with Turkey, including a project relating to an inventory of national capacities in the area of small-scale industry. In addition, UNIDO had established a technical information database which, for example, contained a directory of institutions able to offer training in developing countries.

Ms. ASHRAF (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that TCDC should form an integrated element of programmes. Such an approach had always been taken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in its activities.

Mr. MUDZAKIR (Malaysia) said that the main constraint faced by developing countries was access to technology. It would be of interest to identify which developing countries were in a position to pursue areas of technological development, which could then be accessed by other developing countries through TCDC networks, so that the level of expertise available to developing countries as a group would be at the world level. One area of concern was that of environmentally friendly technology.

Mr. SHOJI (Japan) said that his delegation fully endorsed the emphasis on TCDC and South-South cooperation. The Government of Japan had recently adopted an official development assistance charter detailing specific modalities for bilateral cooperation between Japan and recipient countries.

Mr. RHEE (Republic of Korea) asked how developing countries could access INRES.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said that INRES was accessible by computer and through UNDP field offices. Inquiries were currently running at the rate of some 4,000 a year. The emphasis would now be on improving the quality of information in the database, on decentralization so as to make access easier, and on developing software for use in field offices. UNDP was focusing on capacities already existing within developing countries. The next step would be to expand the system to include data relating to sectoral issues.

Mr. RAMADHAR (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that FAO approached the important issue of technology identification and information by means of evaluation and advice on technology appropriate to particular situations, the circulation of newsletters providing information on national experiences in applying technology to specific tasks, assistance to countries in assessing and documenting their requirements, and the compilation of directories. FAO continually appraised the results obtained and was constantly refining its approach.

Mr. FAN Huishun (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that UNIDO's work in promoting economic and technical cooperation among developing countries included organizing subsectoral workshops, whose main purpose was to provide information about the technology available in particular countries. Examples were those recently held in China, on medicinal plants and synthetic fibre technology. The workshops had been highly successful, and more were being planned.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1992/64, A/47/264-E/1992/71, E/1992/73 and 98; E/1992/L.23 and L.28)

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) said that it was difficult to state how his organization viewed a unified approach to operational activities, since no accepted United Nations definition of that term yet existed. Everyone would surely agree, however, that the aim was to provide a useful input to operational activities for development and to avoid undermining the useful arrangements already in place. Improvements would depend on three key factors: a common country strategy, structured teamwork and common approaches. With regard to the first, all the agencies except one had agreed by consensus, at the time of the previous triennial policy review, on a common country strategy; it should be possible to achieve full consensus at the current review. The support of the entire structure was essential, including an enhanced role for the resident coordinator and facilities for more direct involvement of the Governments concerned.

The major deficiency was not in formal authority but in capacity. It was important that existing human capacity should not be weakened. In that regard, 85 per cent of the staff of the United Nations Children's Fund was in the field, and the field manager played the key role. The question of mandates was likewise vital. Those conferred on some agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, were unique and had made possible a capacity for achievement which must not be eroded. It should be possible, however, to enhance the role of resident coordinator without adversely affecting such mandates.

The lesson of the reform efforts of the 1970s and the associated shift in emphasis to the Bretton Woods institutions should be borne in mind: the results had sadly failed to meet the world's humanitarian needs during the past decade. The decisions which the United Nations currently had to take could either rectify or worsen the situation; the outcome in the field would be the measure of them.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said that the current debate had centred on three main issues: the new support cost arrangements, training, and the role of resident coordinator. With regard to the first, he disagreed that the new arrangements had adversely affected

(Mr. Matthews)

programme implementation and had forced a reduction in the number of field experts. It was too early for those arrangements to have made any impact on the current situation, which was part of the normal cycle. Another factor was the growth in national capacity and in the trend to engage experts on a short-term basis, surely positive developments to which the United Nations system could adapt. It seemed premature, therefore, to call for a review of the situation by the General Assembly.

UNDP was running a major programme of field training in relation to the new support cost procedures. The programme would apply country by country, until all had been covered, and would involve government, agency and UNDP personnel. In a broader sense, training to cover the requirements stemming from General Assembly resolution 44/211 had already been given to some 250 field staff and would be given to some 200 more during the current year.

An example of successful coordination had been cited, at a previous meeting, by the United Nations resident coordinator in Pakistan, who was also UNDP's Resident Representative. That success had resulted chiefly from three factors: agreement among the agency representatives on basic issues; identification of the Government's strategy on vital topics such as population and employment; and close collaboration with the lead agency. Details of similar successful experiences in other countries would be circulated to members of the Council.

With reference to separating the role of resident coordinator from that of UNDP resident representative, the Administrator of UNDP, addressing the high-level segment of the current session, had said that the resident coordinator's role could best be strengthened by enhancing the coordination and funding functions. Current weakness could stem from resistance to coordination, poor capacity on the part of the recipient Government to coordinate donors' inputs, efforts by some donors to favour their own interests at the country level, and occasional uneven leadership. Coordination through a resident coordinator would succeed provided that the team leader had the confidence of all collaborators of the system, adequate resources were available, agreement was reached on a common strategy, based on a structured programme, and the need for the best possible recruitment and

(Mr. Matthews)

training conditions was recognized as essential. With regard to the latter, UNDP possessed all the essential requirements for optimum recruitment conditions and systematic training.

A joint effort was required in the task of strengthening coordination arrangements. But if UNDP support for the office of resident coordinator was removed, it would have to be replaced by some other machinery yet to be designed.

Mr. ELLIS (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the Community attached great importance to the proposed new support cost arrangements and to their potential for enhancing system-wide cooperation. The undeniable complexities could be overcome through adequate training, which UNDP was urged to carry out as speedily as possible.

The support costs were indeed intended to enhance national execution. But they were also intended to strengthen technical capacity and the provision of technical assistance by the agencies. Recipient Governments could assume at least the administrative and operational aspects of technical assistance provision, but it would be disturbing to see a reduction in the provision of technical expertise.

Mr. ATRIA (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), speaking on behalf of all the regional commissions, said that, in discussing programme and project approaches, the Council must not lose sight of the regional approach. The regional commissions, although classed as small agencies in the new support cost arrangements, remained relevant to operational activities for development, and their role in the globalized approach to sustainable development problems and the impact of technological innovations should not be overlooked. Despite their limited role as executing agencies for development, their participation in operational activities for development had expanded and was currently quite sizeable in relation to their regular budget resources. The trend reflected a growing demand for their multidisciplinary services. Their experience in activities at the regional level had been mixed, but served to emphasize the need for close coordination between them and the specialized agencies and greater use of established

(Mr. Atria)

mechanisms such as joint divisions, units and missions for special programmes. Their relations with funding agencies were especially important, as could be seen from the history of mutually supportive activities, especially with UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund in past decades. There could be cases of conflict in regard to jurisdiction and responsibility if the regional commissions' role was not taken into account when global bodies were extending or strengthening their regional presence, thus pointing to the need for clear delineation. The United Nations system's development activities must not be fragmented but should aim to strengthen activity in fields suitable for a regional or subregional approach; they should foster decentralization of programmes and a greater focus on policy coordination and guidance, recognizing the regional commissions' capacity in identifying regional priorities, inter alia.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.